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Terrorist Groups as Modern Organizations

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The intention of this paper is to provide a framework within which to categorize modern Islamic terrorism. Many have argued that terrorism in general and Al-Qaeda in particular spring from a rejection of modernity. There are still others who see terrorist groups as a modern construct. Specific attention will be paid to the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization as a prime example of how modern terrorist groups exhibit traits of both modernity and traditionalism. Through this paper I seek to show that Islamic terrorism is rather a hybrid of traditional and modern aspects formed together to create a post-modem structure.

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Terrorist Groups as Modern Organizations

A Master’s Thesis submitted to

The Faculty of the Master of Science in International Studies Program

In Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Science in International Studies

By

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The intention of this paper is to provide a framework within which to categorize modern Islamic terrorism. Many have argued that terrorism in general and Al-Qaeda in particular spring from a rejection of modernity. There are still others who see terrorist groups as a modern construct. Specific attention will be paid to the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization as a prime example of how modern terrorist groups exhibit traits of both modernity and traditionalism. Through this paper I seek to show that Islamic terrorism is rather a hybrid of traditional and modern aspects formed together to create a post-modern structure.
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Through the research conducted in this Project, I will explore the topic of terrorism; specifically, the Al-Qaeda terrorist network, their structure, ideology, and whether they are, traditional, modern, or post-modern in structure. Section One will discuss the traditional aspects of the Islamic faith and give a brief history. Section Two will explore the history of modern terrorism. Section Three will detail modern aspects and qualities of the Al Qaeda terrorist network. Finally, I will conclude by discussing terror organizations as post modern structures, embodying characteristics of traditionalism and modernity. It is important to understand terrorism, particularly the Islamic terrorist groups such as the Al Qaeda organization, for both theoretical and policy reasons. Currently, the Al Qaeda terrorist organization threatens the safety and security of the world. Although their specific target is the West, there are no specific boundaries or parameters to Al Qaeda’s mission to cause global damage and destruction. Only through research and a developed understanding of the operations of these organizations can security be achieved.

Part I: A brief introduction to Islam

1.1 Main Ideas and Principles

There is, and has been for some time, great misunderstanding about the religion and followers of Islam, especially by Westerners. This section is a brief overview of the main ideas and principles of Islam. Islam is both a religion and a civilization that has spanned over fourteen centuries. It has been and remains today a major religion from
Europe, across Africa, to Asia. Islam is considered by Muslims to be the third part of a message of the Abrahamic monotheistic cycle that was first delivered to the Jewish people, next to the Christian people, and culminating with the Prophet Muhammad and the Islamic people. Islam is similar to Judaism and Christianity in that it is a religion based on Abrahamic principles. It is considered by its followers to be the last major world religion, with the Islamic revelation the third and final revelation of the Abrahamic Monotheistic cycle. Unlike some other world religions, Islam is not based on a particular historical event or ethnic collectivity, but on a Universal Truth.

Muhammad, the Prophet who first delivered the message to the Muslim people, asserted that he alone brought nothing new to the religion of Islam, but rather reaffirmed the truth that always was. Islam is inclusive toward the religions and wisdom that precede it, and has always claimed the earlier Abrahamic prophets as their own as well. All Muslims, whether Sunni or Shi’ite, believe in only one God, that Muhammad was the messenger of that God, and that the Quran is the verbatim revelation of God’s word. The two groups are also in agreement regarding the text content of the Quran; there are no alternative versions of the Quran. The majority of Muslims are Sunni (86%) and the Shi’ites make up the minority (14%). The split between the Sunni’s and the Shi’ites came after the death of the Prophet regarding a question of succession. At the time the majority of the people wanted Abu Bakr to be the first Caliph, while others believed that Abu Bakr, who was a close friend of the Prophet but not a blood relative, was not the correct choice, and that the new Caliph should be Ali the cousin/son-in-law of the Prophet.

2 Ibid., p. 8.
The friction between the Sunnis and the Shi’ites encompassed more than just the issue of succession, but what role the leader should serve in the community. The Sunnis believed that the new leader should protect the Divine Law and act as judge, while also ruling over the community and protecting the order and boarders of the community. Conversely, the Shi’ites believed that the new leader should be able to interpret the Koran and the law and that this person would possess inner knowledge to do so. The Shi’ites believed that because of this the new leader (Imam) should be chosen by God and not the community. Because of this, the Shi’ites believed that the prophet chose Ali as his successor before he died. Shi’ism is very closely associated with the Prophet’s family because all subsequent Imam’s were descendants of Ali and Fatima, the Prophet’s daughter.3

Although Sunnis and Shi’ites disagreed who should have become the next Muslim leader they both shared the belief in the Islamic concept of "ummah." This concept centers on the belief that all Muslims are interrelated. Ummah is a solidarity brotherhood that comprises all Muslims globally based around the Koran and its message.4

1.2 Practices

Another key concept in the Islamic faith is the Five Pillars. The Five Pillars offer the followers of Islam a basic guide similar to the Ten Commandments. The Pillars are a group of ideas to be followed in conjunction the teachings of the Koran. They comprise the foundation of the Islamic faith and are as follows:5

3 Ibid., p. 12.
4 Ibid., p. 15.
1. All Muslims must believe in only one God and accept Muhammad as his Prophet.
2. All Muslims must participate in public prayer 5 times a day.
3. All Muslims must participate in "Zakat" tax to help the poor.
4. All Muslims must fast during the month of Ramadan.
5. All Muslims must make a pilgrimage, or Hajj, to the city of Mecca at least once in their lifetime.

For Muslim people, Islam is not just an activity, like one would participate in politics or enjoy fine art, but rather a matrix within which the rest of the world is viewed. Unlike those in the secularized world, Muslims compose their entire life, not just a small portion of it, around their faith. Religion must embrace one’s entire life, all thought and action must be related back to the principles of Islam. Although Islam has an all encompassing characteristic, it separates its teachings into private and public spheres. There are prayers to be preformed in private and those to be preformed in public. Islam also regulates individual human action of its adherents by providing religious injunctions concerning sexual practices, hygiene, and diet. Muslims are prohibited from drinking alcohol and eating specific meats, such as pork. Overall, Islam, on a private level, emphasizes men’s and women’s duties toward their mind and bodies in relation to God as well as the family. The family constitutes the central institution in the Islamic faith.

Unlike people in secularized societies, Muslims incorporate religion into every facet of their lives. Islam is part of the public as well as private domain. Islamic teaching covers public functions such as the social, economic, and political actions of its followers. For example, the Koran and the Hadith contain specific economic teachings

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7 Ibid., p. 30.
known recently as “Islamic Economics.”8 The Koran emphasizes ethics and social justice to check and limit human greed and selfishness. Islam places specific injunctions on how economic transactions should be carried out, wealth and its distribution, taxes, and the treatment of the poor.

Another public aspect of Islam is its teachings regarding politics and war. The Koran establishes an elaborate code of Islamic conduct for war. This code focuses mainly around defense, as in defense of the religion and homeland from aggression, but does allow for defense of religion and homeland. The Koran makes specific note of how prisoners of war should be treated and prohibits the killing of innocent civilians. The Koran also touches on the concept of Jihad, which has received a great deal of attention since the September Eleventh attacks. According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Jihad or “Holy War” as it is expressed by Western media and terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda, is actually a misrepresentation of the actual Koranic concept. Jihad actually means “exertion in the path of God.” Jihad, as it was initially represented in the Koran, was to be a defensive, not aggressive action.9 The term Jihad has been misused and misrepresented since the 1960’s to mean an aggressive defense of Islam. Jihad, according to the way it was intended by the Koran, is an “exertion to preserve one’s religion or homeland from attack in the traditional Islamic concept.”10

1.3 The Prophet and Caliphates

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8 Ibid., p. 33.
9 Ibid., p. 34.
10 Ibid., p. 34.
Unlike Christianity, the Prophet in Islam is represented as human and not God incarnate, he possesses no God-like powers. The Prophet does differ though from common people in that he was endowed by God as a perfect character. The Prophet, according to Islam, is exactly what all people should strive to be.\textsuperscript{11}

The Prophet Muhammad was born in Mecca in 570 CE. He was born into the tribe of Quraysh, which was a powerful tribe. During this time Arabia was no longer practicing Monotheism, although according to Islamic history, Muhammad never practiced idolatry.\textsuperscript{12} Muhammad lost his parents early in life and was raised by his grandparents and an uncle. He became a trusted and well respected man among his peers. Muhammad married at age 25 a woman named Khadijah, who became the first follower of Islam. Khadijah and Muhammad had several children together including Fatima who would later marry Ali. Fatima is considered the mother of all descendants of the Prophet.\textsuperscript{13}

Muhammad received his first revelation from the Arch Angel Gabriel when he was 40. This revelation composed the first of revelations that he would receive for the next 23 years. Muhammad’s first followers were his wife, Cousin Ali, and his close friend Abu Bakr. Soon though, Muhammad’s followers grew and included many prominent members of the community. This success came with increased animosity for some people in Quraysh. This was mainly because Muhammad’s teachings conflicted directly with the way of life for the people in Quraysh, which involved idol worship. Because of this a plot was formed to kill Muhammad. However, his assassination was avoided by the Prophet’s move to Yathrib (present day Medina) to accept an offer to

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 46.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 48
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 49.
become leader of the city. This happened in June 622 and is of so much importance that it marks the start of the Islamic calendar\textsuperscript{14}. The Prophet serves as an example to Muslim people not only in a religious capacity, but also in the way he lived his life. The way the Prophet dressed, how he treated others, and what he ate is something that Muslims try to emulate. This is called “Sunnah” and has been passed down orally and in written form for centuries. Along with this the Hadith (a collection of the Prophet’s thoughts on human life) is another valuable tool for Muslims to use as guidance with their faith.

From the year 622 to the year 661 is the period of the Prophet and the first four Caliphates. This period in Islamic history is similar to the apostolic age in Christianity, and a period that Muslims look to as example and for guidance. The first Caliphate was that of Abu Bakr (5573-634). This Caliphate is one of four that are regarded by Sunni’s as the “rightly guided Caliphs”\textsuperscript{15}. The second Caliphate was that of Umar (581-644). During this time Islam spread into Syria, Persia, and North Africa, as well as Jerusalem. Umar’s rule is often considered to be the most successful. He established practices and institutions that would become permanent features of Islam. The next Caliphate was Uthman (644-56). Wealth was acquired for Medina during this time from various conquests. This was an area of criticism as also was Uthman’s nepotism. These tensions resulted in an uprising by Abu Bakr’s son who killed Uthman. The death of Uthman by Abu Bakr’s son’s hand created a need for vengeance by Uthman’s son Mu’awiya. This resulted in a division in the religious community that has persisted for centuries\textsuperscript{16}. Lastly, was the Caliphate of Ali (656-61). Ali’s Caliphate was affected by strife on many fronts. Ali had to battle the Quraysh, as well as some of the Prophet’s former companions. Ali

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 50. 
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 116. 
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 117.
moved the capital to Kufa and from there hoped to confront Uthman's son Mu'awiyah and his followers who refused to pay allegiance to Ali. Shortly after a battle with Mu'awiyah Ali was killed.\textsuperscript{17}

From 661-750 Mu'awiyah and the Umayyads ruled as a Caliphate with Damascus as its center. They continued to deal with Shi'ite dissent, but their legacy is a vast system of communication, military, and legal institutions. The Umayyads strengthened administration and military foundations in the empire and Arabized coinage. Yet, during this time they started to loose the support of many Muslims because they were considered by many to be Arab rather than Islamic rulers. Much resentment grew against the Umayyads, especially among non-Arabs such as the Persians. Eventually, the Shi'ites, with the help of the Persians, managed to overthrow the Umayyads and return the Caliphate to its religious origin and the family of the Prophet.\textsuperscript{18}

2.4 Islam Today

Traditional Islam today is very active and prominent. Islam has not followed the same path as Judaism and Christianity by establishing reform modern sects. According to Nasr, Islam is unlikely to undergo any type of modernization any time soon. Religious life and thought will remain within the framework of orthodoxy and tradition for the unforeseeable future\textsuperscript{19}. Nasr seems to view the advent of fundamentalism as modern, at least in the sense that fundamentalism is pushing Islam in a different direction away from its traditional role. Although there is a fundamentalist presence that has disrupted the

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 118.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 191.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 174.
Islamic community at large, the fundamentalists have been unable to provide another theological view that offers a viable alternative to the traditional one. Islamic fundamentalists groups use non-Islamic means to justify so-called Islamic ends\textsuperscript{20}. Fundamentalism, as the West refers to it came to being in 1979 with the Iranian Revolution and the rise to power of Ayatollah Khomeini. This fundamentalism spread and took hold on Afghanistan, Egypt, Sudan, and Palestine\textsuperscript{21}.

Nasr, as other current authors, points to the very foundation of these fundamentalist movements as being representative of modernity. The ideological foundations with which these fundamentalist groups have based their platform are based on Western thought and philosophy. Even the idea of revolution, which these groups are seeking to inspire, is a Western concept, not one inspired through the Koran and its teachings. Nasr further points to the absolute acceptance of Western technology and science as further evidence that these organizations are manipulating the Islamic religion to promote their own political agenda. Nasr, like John Grey, points out those groups such as Al-Qaeda hope to reform the Islamic world back to a simpler time, back towards traditions. These groups though, represent a contradiction. The contradiction lays in the fact that they adopt modern concepts and ideas to try to inspire people to revert back to a traditional lifestyle. Nasr makes the point that many in the Islamic community are making now, which is that fundamentalism is but one part of the broader community. Although it exists it is not as powerful of a force as the misinformation produced though the Western media would like people to believe that it is.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 174.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p. 181.
Modern tendencies within the Islamic community have been more subtle than what many Westerns have hoped they would be at this point, and that has something to do with the media's distortion of the fundamentalist situation. But, there are modern influences in the Islamic community in the form of western technology, education, and general living of life. Even though there are these Western tendencies there is no sign of the religion modernizing. Islam and the Islamic community are at a cross roads currently. The Islamic community is under great stress and faces great strain and challenge to their religion. The Islamic community is confronted by modernism not only through the world surrounding it, but with in its borders as well. The secular world surrounding the Islamic community is materialistically more powerful and is exerting pressure on the Islamic community to reform. The real challenge to Islam today is how to live with the secularized world and prosper with out compromising traditional Islamic ideals and traditions.²²

Part II: History of Modern Terrorism

2.1 Modern Origin and Evolution

Terrorism is a political term and concept that has changed over time based around a variety of political views and motivations. A terrorist is someone who attempts to further his views through coercive intimidation. Terrorism is ultimately about power. Terrorism centers on the pursuit, acquisition, and use of power to inspire political

²² Ibid., p. 186.
change.\textsuperscript{23} Terrorism is violence or the threat of violence used in pursuit of a specific political aim. Most terrorism appears to have the following characteristics: it is political in nature, it is comprised of surprise attacks on targets that may or may not appear to have a connection to the terrorists' agenda, and lastly, terrorism is always committed by non-state actors.\textsuperscript{24} According to Bruce Hoffman, "terrorism is where politics and violence intersect in the hope of delivering power."\textsuperscript{25} All terrorist groups hope to gain change politically through the domination, fear, and intimidation their violent actions produce. The act of terrorism is designed and implemented with the idea of having long term psychological effects on the population targeted.

There is no widely accepted definition of the word terrorism. The act and the definition of the word terrorism have changed many times since its modern appearance during the French Revolution, which is when the word "terrorism" was initially popularized. It initially in this context had a positive meaning, and was closely associated with virtue and democracy. The French Revolution can today be looked at as the origin of modern terrorism. The goal of the French revolutionaries was much the same as today's modern terrorists in that they were trying to create a new and better society by replacing the corrupt and unequal political system that was in place. Robespierre, one of the leaders of the French revolution, believed that "terrorism is nothing but justice, prompt, severe, and inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue".\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 15.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 185.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p. 16.
After the French Revolution came the advent of nationalism throughout Europe as well as the Industrial Revolution, which was followed then by new ideologies such as communism and Marxism. Both of these ideologies were born of the alienation and exploitative conditions of 19th century capitalism. From all of this a new era of terrorism developed which viewed violence as necessary in order to draw attention to a cause. Publicity from the action would hopefully draw supporters to the cause.

During the 1930's the meaning of the word terrorism changed from the way it was initially interpreted during the French Revolution (to describe people who were at war against their government). The term now was used to describe the practices of mass repression employed by totalitarian states against their citizens. Although the French Revolution is often looked at as the beginning of modern terrorism, terrorism did not take on a global quality until 1945. During the 1940's and 50's terrorism's meaning once again changed, this time referring to the liberation of one group from another more powerful one. It is in this context that terrorism is viewed today. After WWII, violent revolts by various indigenous nationalist groups in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East occurred to counter European colonial power. Many of these groups saw themselves not as terrorists, but as freedom fighters as exemplified by late PLO chairman Yassir Arafat in 1974. Arafat felt that the distinction between terrorist and freedom fighter was in the cause of the struggle, and that those who protect their land from invaders cannot be seen as terrorists. This seems to be a common theme among all terrorist organizations. Most modern terrorist groups do not see themselves as the outside world perceives them. One major theme that is common among most modern terrorist groups today is self-denial.

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27 See Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, p. 17.
28 Ibid., p. 45.
Most terrorist groups pick evasive or innocuous sounding names for their organization that are either neutral or serve to conjure up images of freedom and defense. No modern terrorist group has used the word “terrorism” in the title of their name. This is because of their self-denial. Terrorist groups see themselves as defenders of their land or cause, and further see their actions as a corrective response against a repressive state, or whatever it is that they may be fighting.

The denial of most terrorist groups differs somewhat from other types of political extremists as well as others who commit violent, illegal actions. An example of this is that most White Supremacists probably would, if asked, admit to being a supporter, the same would not be true of someone in a terrorist group. The member of the terrorist organization would not see his/herself as belonging to a terrorist group. Terrorists claim that the true terrorists and terrorist actions are conducted by the government. They see themselves as defenders against a system that is damaging the people. All terrorist groups, through their actions seek five main goals: attention, acknowledgement, recognition, authority, and governance. According to Bruce Hoffman some groups have been able to attain the first three, but most modern terrorist organizations will find it difficult to attain all five.\(^\text{30}\)

3.2 Beginnings of modern Middle Eastern terrorism

Terrorism has been widely accepted as threatening action(s) or implied threats to various nation states by non-state actors. Since the 1970's terrorism has been "...associated with a type of covert or surrogate warfare whereby weaker states could

\(^{30}\) See Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, p. 184.
confront larger, more powerful states". This has been mainly associated with actions in the Middle East. Modern terrorism has its roots in political or ideological concepts, with the aim of modern terrorists to affect the international system in such a way that their goal is reached. Terrorism in the Middle East has its origin after WWII in Palestine. The group Irgun is often times considered to be the first terrorist group to operate after WWII. Irgun was a Jewish terrorist organization that hoped to reduce British power in the region. "The Irgun adopted strategy that involved the relentless targeting of those institutions of government that unmistakably represented Britain’s oppressive rule of Palestine". In 1944 the Irgun planned bombings on Tel-Aviv, Haifa, and Jerusalem to affect the immigration offices. The Irgun also planned attacks on the Departments of Tax and Finance, as well as the police and the army. Irgun’s purpose was strategic and they did seek to avoid harming innocent civilians, but for their point to be made often times civilian casualties were necessary. By 1947 Britain started to evacuate the region and stated that it would no longer be responsible for the governance of Palestine.

There were four main reasons why Britain lost control of the region: irreconcilable differences between the Palestinians and the Jewish people, Britain’s disappearing financial resources, international pressure (especially from the US) and internal pressure from Parliament. On May 15, 1948 the State of Israel was proclaimed. It seems that in this instance the terrorist group Irgun was able to capitalize on an already existing weakness with the British and make the weakness worse through their terrorist actions. The direct cause of the British withdrawal was not the Irgun terrorist group, but

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31 Ibid., p. 27.
32 Ibid., p. 50.
33 See Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, p. 50.
34 Ibid., p. 56.
through their actions the Irgun helped to speed up the process of British removal. This result was not lost on other aggrieved peoples in the region. The violence terrorism created forced governments to take notice of and address on some level the issues surrounding the terrorist acts, or the major issue of the terrorist group. For this reason the anti-colonial terrorism of Irgun is important to understanding the modern terrorist organizations in the Middle East.

What many consider to be the beginning of modern international terrorism occurred on July 22, 1968. On this day the violent act was committed by Palestinian terrorists, who were members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which was also part of the PLO at the time. These terrorists hijacked a plane that was flying from Rome to Tel-Aviv. This event was not the first time a commercial airliner had been hijacked, but it was the first time that an airliner was hijacked without the intention of diverting the flight's destination. The terrorists who hijacked this plane had the intent of using the passengers as hostages to trade for Palestinian prisoners in Israel. Another difference in this particular case is that the terrorists specifically targeted an El Al flight because of its Israel ownership. At this time the Israeli government refused to acknowledge or deal with terrorist groups, such as the PLO. Through this hijacking the Israeli government was forced to not only recognize the PFLP's power over them, but to also negotiate with them.

The El Al hijacking had a profound effect on terrorism globally, and specifically on Islamic terrorism. This event illuminated to the PFLP, the PLO, and other Islamic terrorist groups the power of their actions, especially on the media. The media covered the hijacking extensively and gave the terrorists the attention to their cause that they had

been wanting. Terrorists realized through this event that their actions from now on would be covered by the media and that through this they could receive more attention for their cause than they had through utilizing the United Nations.\textsuperscript{36} After the El Al hijacking the nature of terrorism drastically changed. Terrorists traveled to different countries to conduct terrorist acts, and they also began to target more heavily innocent civilians in these countries in order to gain more media attention. The goal of targeting civilians removed from the direct cause was to create a pervasive climate of shock and fear that would reverberate not just all over the targeted area, but throughout the world. Terrorists wanted to make sure that no population felt safe, and through this their organization would gain global attention. From 1968-1980 the PLO exemplified this by committing the most international terrorist acts of any other movement. The way that the PLO has publicized their cause through international terrorism has since served as a model for other Islamic terrorist organizations, as well as other ethnic/nationalist movements globally.

It is interesting to note that most Islamic terrorist organizations do not consider themselves to be terrorists. This is simply because the Islamic faith does not approve of terrorism. Islamic terrorist groups, rather see themselves as Mujihadeen or "holy warriors" due to the fact that these individuals consider themselves to be defending their homeland against enemies.\textsuperscript{37} Islamic terrorists see themselves as outsiders from the global community. Religious terrorists seek to change the existing order of the world. The fact that they consider themselves outsiders and view their enemies as sub-human in most cases, enables religious terrorists to commit and accept very destructive forms of

\textsuperscript{36} See Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, p. 68.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 31.
violence to promote their cause\textsuperscript{38}. Since use of the term "terrorist" implies moral judgment, and through this it can be said that what is considered terrorism is purely subjective.

3.3 Development of modern international terror

There are certain core characteristics that are common among religious terrorist groups. For example, violence is necessary because it is in response to a theological demand or imperative. Religious terrorists are indiscriminate about their killing because they often seek to destroy a broad group of “enemies,” with the expectation that large scale violence will attain this goal faster. Another difference between religious and secular terrorists is in how they perceive the world and their place in it. Secular terrorist groups are often trying to achieve a political goal as well as defend or avenge a group of people. This, for the most part, can be said for religious terrorists as well, but the primary difference between the two groups is that the secular terrorists have certain limitations on their actions because they are trying to appeal to a particular constituency and gain sympathy and support from them. Secular terrorists will refrain from certain types of activity out of fear of losing the legitimacy of their cause. On the other hand, religious terrorists, although they may be seeking achievement of a particular goal, seek to appeal to no other constituency but themselves. In other words, secular terrorists are operating under more constraints on their behavior than religious terrorists groups.

Although they are often grouped together, there needs to be made a distinction between terrorist groups and guerilla warfare groups. Guerilla units are many times

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 91.
larger than terrorist organizations. Guerilla units operate as paramilitary units, mostly attack only enemy military forces, while trying to seek and control territory. Conversely, terrorist groups do not function openly as military units, they avoid engaging directly with enemy military forces, and they rarely exercise control over territory.

The exception to this difference is the Al-Qaeda organization. In 1996 Osama Bin Laden issued a fatwa which contained a formal proclamation of war against the United States. In this document Bin Laden conceded that the United States had greater military strength than Al-Qaeda. Bin Laden further stated that “due to the imbalance of power between our armed forces and the enemy forces, a suitable means of fighting must be adopted, i.e., using fast-moving light forces that work under complete secrecy. In other words to initiate guerrilla warfare…” Through this statement Bin Laden was advocating for his organization to become like a guerrilla unit and attack the enemies using what he referred to as the “sons of the nation” instead of a professional military force. It was not until two years after Bin Laden issued his fatwa against the United States that the seriousness of Al-Qaeda’s intent to wage war on the U.S. was noted by the American government. In 1998 the CIA sent a memorandum to congress stating that Al-Qaeda was intent on killing Americans throughout the world.

In 1969 the Palestinians hosted a delegation of West German terrorists at their camp in Jordan. The West German group was there to receive training, indoctrination, and general networking. This event is significant because it is the first time terrorist groups networked together to share information and build skills. This is an event that still

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39 See Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, p. 41.
41 Ibid., pgs. 148-49.
continues today with groups such as AL-Qaeda\textsuperscript{42}. By 1972 the PLO had become a cohesive and driven unit. In September 1972 the PLO staged an attack at the Olympic Games in Munich.

The Olympic attack ultimately achieved for the PLO what statesmen and lobbyists had been trying to achieve for a long time, which was to bring the Palestinian issue out into the open. Eighteen months after the Olympic event the PLO was given the opportunity to address the United Nations General Assembly. Shortly after that the PLO was given special observer status within the United Nations. By the end of the 1970's the PLO had more diplomatic contacts than the nation of Israel. After the Olympic terror event, the PLO gained a relative degree of success, in that the world was now aware of and speaking about the Palestinian issue. They also gained a certain degree of legitimacy through their inclusion into the U.N. The PLO, because of the strides they were able to make through terrorism, inspired many other ethno-nationalist/separatist movements. By 1978 there were 55 organizations involved in international terror. This was an increase from 1968 where there were only 11\textsuperscript{43}.

Not only was the PLO the first to train, network, and inspire other terrorist organizations, but it was also the first terrorist organization to acquire wealth. By the mid 1980's the PLO's annual estimated income was around 600 million dollars.\textsuperscript{44} This is one reason why the PLO remains an organization that other terrorist organizations aspire to be like. The PLO has financial and political influence, and has acquired influence among the international community. This sends a powerful message to other terrorist groups.

Some claim though, that with the international legitimization of the PLO their

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 82.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 75.
\textsuperscript{44} See Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, p. 86.
commitment to terrorism has waned. This does appear to be true to some degree. By recognizing the terrorist group, the international community appeared to have neutralized the PLO to a certain extent. The PLO, by being part of the international community, has no desire to drastically disrupt international order. The main reason being that it does not want to destroy the support and financial backing it receives from the international community. This does not mean that the PLO solely operates as a political body, it still operates like a terrorist organization, but to a certain extent the PLO gauges its actions on how the international community will receive it. Through this, some may say that the movement has now become "bureaucratized" and that would be true to a certain extent by the fact that the PLO is the ruling party of the Palestinian National Authority.\(^{45}\)

Until the 19th century, religious terrorism was the primary source for terrorist activity. With the end of monarchical rule and the emergence of such relatively new concepts such as nationalism and self-determination, the role of the citizen re-developed. This established a new development in terrorism where the focus was drawn less from religion and more from Marxism, anarchism, and other secular ideologies. This development occurred after WWII with the influence of the anti-colonial/national liberation movements that developed. This changed though in 1980 after the Iranian revolution. It is during this time when the modern religious terrorist groups took on a more active international role, and by 1992 there were eleven religious terrorist organizations actively operating internationally. During the 1980's the number of active religious terrorist groups increased and the number of ethno-nationalist/separatist groups operating internationally decreased. As communism fell apart, new nations gained entry

\(^{45}\) Ibid., pp. 85-86.
into the international community, thus enabling ethno/nationalist groups to take on a more regional focus and stop international activity.\textsuperscript{46}

Religious terrorism is marked by a dangerous mix of alienation, religious identity and doctrine. This forms a powerful combination of psychological motivators. Although religious terrorism centers on religious doctrine, it appears that for many involved religion is but one part of the equation that includes socioeconomic issues as well. It should be noted that overall, religious terrorism tends to be more violent, in that it often claims a higher proportion of lives than secular terrorism. To put this in perspective, in 1991, when religious terrorism was not as active as it is currently, there were 565 documented terror attacks; from those attacks 102 people were killed. In 1998, when secular terrorism was less active than religious terrorism, there were less attacks (274), but more deaths. In 1995 religious terrorists committed 25 percent of the terrorist acts for that year, according to the RAND St. Andrews chronology. Yet, religious terror acts were responsible for 58 percent of the total terrorist fatalities recorded that year.

The increase in violence can further be exemplified by the Shi'ia Islamic terror groups. These groups committed eight percent of the total international terror incidents between 1982-1989, but were responsible for 30 percent of the total number of fatalities for those years. By 1995 nearly all of the identifiable international terrorist groups operating (56 total) were religious terror organizations. Since the mid-1990's the main focus of international religious terror groups has been the targeting of the United States. In 1994 there were 66 acts targeting American's, and by the year 2000 there were 200 attacks against American specific targets. The 200 attacks accounted for almost fifty

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., pp. 90-91.
percent of the attacks for that year\textsuperscript{47}. And, in the year 2004 according to the State Department, there were 650 international terrorist attacks. This is an increase of roughly 475 attacks from the previous year\textsuperscript{48}.

Another way that terrorist groups seek to fulfill their objectives is through state sponsored terrorist acts. Since the 1980's there has been an emergence of active state sponsored terrorist activity in the Middle East. State sponsored terrorism is the active and often clandestine support, encouragement, and assistance provided by a government to a terrorist group. Many of the governments that are sponsoring terrorism do so as a way to wage war in an undercover manner against enemy states by using terrorists to battle on their behalf. The emergence of modern state sponsored terrorism can be traced back to 1979 when Iranian militant students took 52 Americans hostage at the US embassy in Tehran. The students claimed at the time that they were acting independently and without any backing from the government of Iran. Only later on was it realized that the US Embassy incident was to be part of a larger campaign against the West by Ayatollah Khomeini. The Iranian Revolution served as a model and inspiration to Islamic terror groups. The revolution reaffirmed the ideas of reasserting the fundamental teachings of the Koran as well as resisting Western influence or intrusion which is a common theme among the majority of Islamic terror organizations\textsuperscript{49}. The state sponsored terrorism by Iran displayed to other countries in the region, such as Libya, Syria, and Iraq, that hiring

\textsuperscript{48} See \url{http://www.commondreams.org}. Accessed on December 9, 2005
\textsuperscript{49} See Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, pp. 90-91.
terrorist groups to secretly work for the government was a viable, inexpensive, and relatively risk-free way of attacking other stronger governments.\textsuperscript{50}

State sponsored terrorism has allowed various groups to develop into very large, dangerous, sophisticated, and rich organizations through the money, training, and resources gained from the countries that have hired their services. State sponsored terrorism has had a very large effect on the terrorist community. Unlike traditional terrorism, state sponsored terrorism’s goal is not gaining publicity for a cause. Its goal is to achieve a particular foreign policy objective for its client. Through this, state sponsored terrorism operates under much fewer constraints than non-state sponsored terrorism. State sponsored terrorist attacks tend to be more destructive and fatal than ordinary terrorist attacks because state sponsored terrorists are not trying through their actions to appeal to the public for support of their cause.

The US State Department has listed seven countries as being actively involved in state sponsored terrorist activity: Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, North Korea, and Sudan. Iran allegedly provides Islamic terrorist organizations with roughly 100 million dollars a year, with most of that money going to support the group Hezbollah. According to Hoffman, “for the state sponsor, much as for the terrorist group itself, terrorism – contrary to the popular perception - is not a mindless act of fanatical or indiscriminate violence, but a purposefully targeted, deliberately calibrated method of perusing specific objectives at acceptable costs.”\textsuperscript{51}

One of the major ways that terrorism has changed since the French Revolution is in its tactics and targets. In the past terrorists groups operated under defined command

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p. 186.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., pp. 187-195
and control. Terrorist groups in the past also used to engage in specifically discriminate acts against specific targets. These targets were often times symbolic of the groups cause/point, or enemy. Although terrorist groups still seek symbolic targets, the recent surge in Islamic terrorism by groups such as Al-Qaeda demonstrates how the old system of terrorism has become obsolete. Al-Qaeda operates very successfully without a strict system of command and control. This makes the organization more inexpensive to run, and more adept at avoiding outside attack. The system of command and control that once ruled over terrorist groups has given way to a more diffuse structure and membership that is harder for the global community to track and predict. An example of this how Al-Qaeda receives its support. Support appears to fall into two categories: those who support Al-Qaeda because of their religious ideology, and those who support Al-Qaeda because they feel left behind and alienated by the economies of their home country.

Since the beginning of modern day terrorism, people have been dismissing terrorists and terrorist groups as mindless, obsessive, and mal-adjusted. This short-sighted criticism dismisses terrorist groups and their motivation instead of seeking to study and better understand their desires, goals, and reasoning. Only through active examination of these groups and their mindset will the global community be able to protect themselves against such tactics.

Part III: Examination of Al Qaeda as a modern organization

Much has been written and said about terrorism and the Al Qaeda organization since the attacks of September 11, 2001. Many view organizations such as Al-Qaeda as traditional organizations that are in direct conflict with modernity. Those who view Al-
Qaeda as a traditional organization see it as trying to reclaim a culture and traditional way of life that was taken by globalization and the West. Through this lens Al-Qaeda is looked at as fighting this new system by using the system against itself to destroy it, rather than adapting and manipulating it to fit their cultural needs. Others view this manipulation of modernity by Al-Qaeda quite differently. There are those such as John Grey and Rohan Gunaratna who have written about the modern quality of terrorist groups today, specifically Al-Qaeda. Those who view Al-Qaeda as a modern organization point to its structure, organization, even its ideology as examples of its modern composition.

4.1 Creation and Structure

The Al-Qaeda organization was founded in 1988. It was not initially intended to be a terrorist organization, but more so a philosophy. According to Rohan Gunaratna, "Al-Qaeda is a political group driven by an interpretive religious ideology," similar to Hamas. Al-Qaeda would like to present itself as a traditional organization, or answer to the depravity of modernity, but authors such as Gunaratna feel that Al-Qaeda, is not only interpreting the Koran to meet its political goals, but is very much a modern organization. Although Osama Bin Laden is the name most often associated with the organization, Al-Qaeda itself was not conceptualized by Bin Laden. The ideological concept of the organization was created by Abdullah Azzam, who was the leader of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood. In 1989 Azzam was killed in a car bombing in Pakistan. Bin Laden had been very involved in the support of Azzam's organization before his death,
and after would turn the organization into what the world now recognizes as Al-Qaeda, which means “the base” in Arabic.52

Al-Qaeda is a transnational organization; this is one major characteristic that separates the organization from other terrorist groups that mostly operate locally. Al-Qaeda is not a single group, but rather a conglomerate of groups. It has core bases in Afghanistan and satellite territories elsewhere worldwide. Al-Qaeda is divided into four subgroups: strategic and tactical direction, global terrorist operations, guerilla warfare (based in Afghanistan), and a vast coalition of transnational terrorist and guerilla groups.53

The leadership in the Al-Qaeda organization is divided along a vertical structure. There is much disagreement about how Al-Qaeda actually is set up as an organization. There are those who believe that Al-Qaeda is a structured organization with an identifiable command and control apparatus. While still others view Al-Qaeda as being more fluid and unstructured of an organization, an organization held together by an ideology shared among the vast network of transnational followers. The former perception of Al-Qaeda seems to be a more accurate description of the organization pre-September 11th and, the latter perception of Al-Qaeda seems to be what the organization has adapted into after September 11th. The organization appears to be operating currently in a similar fashion to a franchise organization. Al-Qaeda’s followers all believe ideologically in what the organization stands for. Most participants receive similar

training, and all participants are working independently toward reaching the goal of the organization following a set of rules and procedures. 54

The leadership provides support of a tactical and strategic nature to the horizontal network of cells and outside members. The structure of Al-Qaeda allows for direct and indirect control over the far reaching organization. Bin Laden gains control over the vast group through pronouncements, speeches, and writings. Although Bin Laden is able to gain control over Al-Qaeda cells when needed, the cells operate relatively independently of each other with their own command, control and communication structures. One example of this is the fact that often Al-Qaeda does not equip its cells with very much money to conduct its operations. So, as part of initial training members are trained in credit, check, and identity fraud as a way to autonomously fund and maintain the cell structure. Al-Qaeda’s military structure is also quite modern, due in part to the fact that some members were trained by the US and UK during the Soviet/Afghan war. Al-Qaeda’s intelligence is also very modern and has been considered as comparable to some government intelligence agencies. 55

Many Islamic political parties are active in Al-Qaeda and many independent terrorist groups offer Al-Qaeda defensive action by providing terrorist acts for the organization. Another unique feature of the Al-Qaeda organization is its broad-based ideology and membership that cuts across racial and class boundaries. This is a very modern feature of the organization. Most other terrorist organizations that have emerged out of the Middle East since 1968 have been mono-ethnic. This is exemplified by groups such as Hezbollah, which recruits only Lebanese, Egyptian Islamic Jihad, which recruits

54 Ibid., p. 54-70.
55 Ibid., p. 54-70
only Egyptians, and the Armed Islamic Group, which recruits only Algerians. This feature of Al-Qaeda was the idea of Azzam, and was a way for Al-Qaeda to become a multi-national organization. This has been one of the most important factors in Al-Qaeda’s broad based international appeal.

Those who view Al-Qaeda as a modern structure also feel that the organization was shaped not only by the teachings of the Koran, but Western philosophy as well. Modern Western influences such as Marx and Nietzsche are infused into Islamic themes to form part of the ideology of Al-Qaeda. This forms an interesting contradiction in the organization. Al-Qaeda feels that the West is morally bankrupt, yet part of the roots of the ideology Al-Qaeda has created is based in part on theories put forth by Westerners.

Another way that the organization is influenced by Western thought is in the idea that Al-Qaeda holds that they as an organization can remake certain human conditions. The goal of Al-Qaeda, to open up the world to Islam, to create fairness and justice for Islam, and to stop the “Crusaders,” is actually, according to John Grey, a modern myth. Grey states that as many other groups before them, such as the Nazi party, Al-Qaeda will fail in their goal because it is human nature to be in conflict. From this, authors that favor Al-Qaeda as a modern organization see it as having more in common with modern European revolutionaries than ancient Koranic teachings.

4.2 Ideology and Membership

As stated earlier, Al-Qaeda has a broad ideology which has enabled the organization to attract wide-spread support. There are some who view all terrorist groups

currently operating in the Middle East as modern. Those who argue this feel that all
traditional terrorist organizations were unsuccessful “… because they relied on village,
clan, and tribe and built organizations based on traditional loyalties.”57 Because of this,
these organizations lack the resilient quality that is needed to operate and function
successfully in the modern world. Conversely, Al-Qaeda draws from Leninism and
Marxism, follows a cell structure, maintains a tight discipline, promotes self-sacrifice,
and is self-reproducing. In this regard Al-Qaeda is hard to defeat. Bin Laden, not
having been trained formally as a religious scholar, has a more pragmatic mind-set and
from this has decided that doctrinal flexibility in the organization is key to its successful
recruitment of new members. Propaganda is an important tool for Al-Qaeda, not just for
recruitment, but also for legitimizing the organization itself. Al-Qaeda places great
emphasis on suicide, or martyrdom bombings. This is reflected in the fact that most Al-
Qaeda attacks are with suicide bombers. This forms a tactical strategy for Al-Qaeda
because through these bombings Al-Qaeda is showing its enemies that its recruits are
willing to make the ultimate sacrifice of their lives toward Al-Qaeda’s cause. This fact is
representative of Al-Qaeda’s massive threat.

Al-Qaeda poses a threat on multiple fronts. Not only does Al-Qaeda pose a
threat militarily, but also ideologically. One threat cannot be defeated without addressing
the other. According to Gunaratna, if the US chooses to address only Al-Qaeda’s
military then this will do nothing to prevent Al-Qaeda from recruiting many more
disenfranchised Muslim youth into the organization.58 This recruitment does not
necessarily have to come from the Middle East. There are many disenfranchised Muslim

57 See, Gunaratna, Inside Al Qaeda, p.222
58 Ibid., p.92
youth living in Europe and the West, the London bombings of this past summer (2005) were carried out by four British citizens. The London bombers were supported by Al-Qaeda, which shows that Islamic terrorist organizations are able to attract Muslim youth from all over the globe, not just in economically depressed areas. Much of the problem with European Muslim youth lies in the fact that many feel displaced. They do not feel welcome and accepted as European, nor do they feel truly part of the Middle East either. Many Muslims who live in Europe feel shut out from society and the government. Since 1990 the Muslim population in Europe has grown from 10 million to 14 million.

Unfortunately many Muslims live in poverty and suffer from unemployment. Many Muslim’s perceive European public policies as specifically targeting them and feel there is a lack of opportunity for them in society. This lack of connection toward their home society leads many Muslim individuals to seek connection through religion. Sometimes this makes individuals targets for jihadist networks. In some circumstances the War in Iraq has served to further drive a wedge between Muslims and non-Muslims because some perceive the War in Iraq/terror as being a direct attack on Muslim people. This sentiment is further encouraged through organizations such as Al-Qaeda which state that citizenship should not be a priority because it only serves to block Muslims from their true loyalty which is to God. Another modern feature to the Al-Qaeda organization can be found in its efforts to collect intelligence. Globalization has brought about an increase in the ability of non-state organizations to gather intelligence on various countries, as well as the ability to evade intelligence gathering. Organizations such as Al-
Qaeda are acting like international enterprises through their desire to collect and disseminate intelligence.\textsuperscript{59}

4.3 Al-Qaeda: the next phase of modern terrorism

There is also great emphasis placed in the organization for youths to reflect on the state of their societies. Al-Qaeda attributes... “Muslim society’s great misfortune and decadence too their abandonment of Jihad”... \textsuperscript{60} The concept of “jihad” as the Western world knows of it is a relatively modern concept. As originally intended the principle aims of jihad are to “Remove oppression and injustice; to establish justice, well-being, and prosperity; and to eliminate barriers to the spread of the truth.”\textsuperscript{61} The concept of Jihad was developed into its modern context by Sayyib Qutb (1906-56) and was specifically regarding Jihad against Israel. Qutb was an Egyptian teacher, who was trained by the Western system. In 1948 Qutb made a trip to the United States to study. This trip is often sited as being what radicalized Qutb toward the West. Although there were aspects of American culture that shocked him, Qutb returned to his country with a desire to promote education, medicine and Western science as a way to develop his people.\textsuperscript{62} Perhaps the more logical reason for Qutb radicalizing came in the 1950’s when he was jailed and tortured for his views on Gamal Abdel Nasser’s government. It was after that when Qutb advocated for violence against unjust regimes under the banner of jihad. During this time the concept of jihad was transformed from a communal action to

\textsuperscript{60} See Gunaratna, Inside Al-Qaeda, p.88
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., p. 84
an individual action, with each Muslim bearing the responsibility of defending the faith. Although Qutb was speaking as a Muslim and reaching out to other Muslim people, his thoughts resonated with Western revolutionary principles. Jihad, as a political concept familiar to the Western world, has been prevalent since 1979.

Al-Qaeda uses and manipulates the concept of jihad in its recruitment tactics as well as for justification of their actions. Al-Qaeda urges its followers to utilize jihad against "Islam’s enemies", referring to America and the Western world. Al-Qaeda, as shown throughout this paper, has many strategies for manipulating its converts. Al-Qaeda operatives have sought to infiltrate Muslim communities in Europe and gain support from the second and third generation Muslim youth living there. Al-Qaeda operatives use the concept of Jihad to convince these individuals that defending the Muslim faith as well as having loyalty only to the Muslim community is central to the faith.

Another way that Al-Qaeda manipulates its followers is by exploitation of regional causes. Al-Qaeda operates through the use of cells, and many cells operate on a local level addressing local issues. In many cases Al-Qaeda will co-opt cells to pursue their larger long-range goals in addition to the parochial goal. The concept of Jihad, which Al-Qaeda has manipulated to attract supporters, is intended to result in the reinstating of the Muslim Caliphate, not just in the Middle East, but around the globe. This is a goal that many followers may or may not realize that they are participating in. Al-Qaeda's battle lines are not just drawn against the American support of Israel or the invasion of the Muslim holy lands by the West, their goal is much more expansive.
There are several types of recruits to the Al-Qaeda organization. One type is the “sophisticated” operative. This person intends on joining the organization specifically and attends a formal training camp. This type of operative is highly skilled and is involved in the intelligence gathering, choosing of targets, bomb making, and surveillance in the region being scouted. These operatives are aware of and participate in Al-Qaeda’s global Jihad, they are often times either killed as a result of the operation or are given a means to get out of the region before the operation is conducted, so as to be utilized for another operation at a further date. Another type of operative is the disposable operative. These individuals are many times recruited from local Mosques by the sophisticated operatives. Their recruitment is often times based on their local knowledge, connections, residency, and skill. These individuals may or may not be aware of the fact that they are being recruited for an Al-Qaeda mission, only rather that they are participating in a mission of Jihad to protect Islam. Often times these operatives are left at the scene or in the region to be killed, or picked up by local authorities. This poses relatively no risk to Al-Qaeda because these operatives have relatively no knowledge of the organization or their handlers. As a result of this these operatives are not aware of and were not trying to participate in Al-Qaeda’s long-range goal, but rather were participating in a mission based on local concerns.62

Most modern Middle Eastern states, as well as terrorist organizations, since the end of the cold war have changed and increased in size. From this a new Middle Eastern state, as well as a new breed of terrorist has developed. The Al-Qaeda organization is representative of that new breed. Al-Qaeda is, as stated previously, more than an organization, but an ideology. Al-Qaeda represents the next phase in modern terrorism.

Al-Qaeda is decentralized, hard to tract and difficult to predict. Al-Qaeda is a system of decentralized cells that operate independently of each other, but all under one ideology and one hope to bring the Muslim world together and reinstate the Caliphate. Abu Massoud Al-Zarqawi, who operates the Al-Qaeda in Iraq insurgency, and just recently co-coordinated an attack in Jordan, is a key example of Al-Qaeda’s de-centralization operating under one philosophy. Many groups are inspired by Al-Qaeda’s actions and philosophy. Groups such as Abu-Sayyaf (Philippines), Islamiyah (Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore), and al-Jihad (Egypt) all allegedly have connections to Al-Qaeda.

Al-Qaeda is willing to suffer any amount of casualties in order to fulfill their goal. Al-Qaeda views the following six western entities as enemies of Islam: the United Nations, Multi National Corporation’s, Muslim regimes that cooperate with the West, international data and communication exchange systems, International relief agencies, and satellite media channels. Al-Qaeda is willing to take on the full retaliation of the West to accomplish their goals, mainly because Al-Qaeda is confident that they will be able to find an endless supply of recruits to rebuild their organization. Al-Qaeda’s confidence may come from the socio-economic instability in many Middle Eastern countries. Many such as John Grey, and Samuel Huntington, view the end of the cold wars as the beginning of modern resource wars. Rising populations in the Middle East are currently dependant on a rapidly disappearing commodity (oil). These rising populations are also being subjected to an increase in anti-Americanism though education and society, this coupled with high unemployment and falling living standards creates a situation which is fueling an increase in Islamic fundamentalism.64 Grey and Huntington

both argue that this modern clash between “East and West” was inevitable because ethnic and religious differences and scarcity of natural resources.

**Conclusion**

Many view Islamic terror as being centuries old, but the current wave of Islamic terror appears to be a fairly recent phenomenon that is in response to postcolonial policies and politics, socioeconomics, and alienation. The terrorists that seek to partake in "jihad" are a byproduct of the oppressive rule that has been prevalent in the Middle East for some time. But, unlike previous movements that occurred in the late 19th century, the current terrorist movement is not intellectual or reactive, rather anarchistic and active. Many terrorist organizations today, specifically Al-Qaeda have a total mistrust of mainstream political systems. Al-Qaeda seeks through its actions to return the Middle East toward practicing more "pure" Islam, they hope to create a government of God and reinstate the Muslim Caliphate. A key component to the legitimization of groups such as Al-Qaeda is creating an enemy to use as a scapegoat for various problems with the acceptance of terrorism as the solution while simultaneously generating mass hatred toward that group by supporters. This is where the hatred toward the West and globalization comes into play. A core component to modernization is choice and, choice contradicts tradition. Traditional practices create a degree of truth and certainty. In a traditional system practices are not questioned or challenged, their validity and truth are taken at face value. Globalization has changed this and released many aspects of life from the hold of tradition, and in many places given people more choices about how to live their lives. Going back to a more traditional way of existing is something that many terrorist groups, at least on the surface, advocate for. But, it is apparent not only from the structure, but the
ideologies, recruiting techniques, and modern conveniences that many terrorist groups utilize that these organizations are part of the modern system as well.

From the information gathered for this project I have not found convincing evidence that Islamic terror organizations are composed of total traditionalism, nor a medieval ideology. The argument promoting these organizations as modern, although more convincing, is still lacking as well. In conclusion, it appears that modern Islamic terrorist organizations are operating as hybrids of both traditionalism and modernity, or as post modern structures. There are both modern and traditional aspects combined into the philosophy and structure of modern terrorist groups, this makes them a hybrid of both. Terrorism is not necessarily a direct revolt against modernity. Because of the fusion of modern methods and traditional results, terrorism is post modern. Islamic terrorist groups seek a traditional goal using modern means. This is exhibited through the continuing and new facets to modern terrorism. The continuing features are those such as the political struggle that has always characterized terrorism, as well as the notion that the current system is operating corruptly. One of the new facets to modern terrorism is the increase in religious terrorism. Another new feature to modern terrorism is the specific targeting of Americans and Westerners that terrorist organization such as Al-Qaeda practice. An additional modern feature to international religious terrorism is that it is more lethal than previous forms of terrorism. As mentioned, modern religious terrorism has targeted Americans more heavily since the 1990’s the specific targeting of Americans internationally and not just in the United States is another modern feature to religious terrorism.
Lastly, terrorism threatens the nation-state on many levels. Terrorism threatens not only the security, but also the validity of the nation-state. Many, such as Thomas L Friedman, Samuel Huntington, and Shaul Shay feel that in the upcoming century the threat to the nation-state will not only come from non-state actors, but the majority of conflicts that erupt globally will be not between states, but rather between these non-state entities. The concern of many is that these non-state actors (such as Al-Qaeda) will go on to form a substitute for our current normative systems, replace them, and gain legitimacy. This is one of the more startling predictions surrounding Al-Qaeda and its potential future. This prediction, if true, once more represents a modern aspect of the organization. Al Qaeda’s biggest advantage is that it can transform itself into what it needs to be in order to be successful in any given region. This fact is one of the most important issues that I have arrived at so far. The fact that Al Qaeda is an international problem makes the implications of not understanding it and studying it enormous. Al Qaeda truly is a multi-faceted dangerous organization, but it is just that, an organization. Al Qaeda can be studied and understood. And from examination and analysis, understanding as well as predictions about the organization can be made.
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